



A renewed Katie Hartman is up and running with the same old passion.

Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



Brooks: New Team, New Goals Put Hartman In Good Place

Release: 06/26/2012 Courtesy: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

BOULDER - Katie Hartman is in a good place - literally a very good place considering the triple-digit heat that's blanketed this area for the past several days.

Hartman woke up Tuesday morning to five inches of new snow on Mt. Hood and pouring rain in Portland. The hot, harsh reality of what's going on back in Colorado comes courtesy of a telephone call from an uncle who lives near Fort Collins and is among the High Park fire evacuees simply wondering what comes next and when a break might occur.

"I'm trying a rain dance up here for Colorado . . . I know it's bad," Hartman said, her voice a little more serious than you might think.

The indefatigable former University of Colorado skier isn't in Oregon to escape the heat. Fact is, she and three of her peers are trying to generate a little heat - in a positive way for their gender - as they pursue their Olympic dreams.

The dream is relatively new for the talented Hartman, who recovered nicely and nearly miraculously from a torn ACL to ski an extra season for CU, and a younger junior skier named Lena Andrews. It's not so new for former Olympians Hailey Duke and Megan McJames, both members of the U.S. Ski Team in the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver. Both also earned World Cup berths via the North American Cup Circuit and fared pretty well -

McJames winning the overall GS title and Duke taking third overall in the slalom.

But they're no longer on the U.S. Ski Team because they can't afford it. That's right. They still might ski well enough to represent their country, but that might not get them to Sochi, Russia for the 2014 Winter Olympics.

Economic recovery hasn't occurred fast enough to suit anyone, and this is what it's come to in the U.S. Olympic world: Choices must be made on which athletes receive funding. Former gold medalists and the top echelon endorsement earners - say, a Lindsey Vonn or a Shaun White - have no problems keeping equipment up to date/fine tuned or purchasing plane tickets to international competition out of their own pockets if need be.

But for the lesser lights (and that isn't meant derogatorily), coming up with the necessary cash can be a problem. McJames and Duke were hit hard; they lost their spots because they couldn't afford to keep them.

(Just askin': Isn't there a Super Pac out there that can steer a little cash their way instead of to the already annoying political TV ads we'll have shoved at us over the next five months?)

McJames, of Salt Lake City, and Duke, of Boise, first started The Athlete Project (www.athlete-project.com), then formed a team - Independent Ski Racing, LLC - and are taking a shot at fund-raising through their website. Hartman insists that it's not a particularly new concept on the men's side of the sport, but it hasn't been done that often or that successfully on the distaff side.

And that's where she enters the picture: She and Andrews have teamed up with the pair of former Olympians in hopes of finding sponsors, funding their skiing and continuing to compete for as long and far as they can.

Hartman and former CU teammate Erika Ghent had talked of forming their own team and trying to raise funds to further their skiing, but that venture fizzled when Hartman said Ghent preferred to "base out of Vail and I wasn't ready to hook back up to a club team."

So Hartman shifted her focus to the U.S. Ski Team "just to wait and see what was going on with them, what they were up to . . . they spent the spring going through their roster, figuring out next year's goals, their fund raising - and they ended up cutting a pair of Olympians, just asked them not to return. When I heard they didn't have anywhere else to go, we got in touch and said, 'Let's figure this out.'"

"Normally, when you get cut, you're expected to just quit - maybe get a desk job," McJames told Salt Lake City's *Deseret News*. "But we kind of felt that it was unprecedented to get cut after earning a World Cup spot. I felt like I'd worked so hard, to let my dream of racing on the World Cup just die, well, I couldn't . . ."

"We don't want to be against the U.S. Ski Team at all. We just feel like this is our opportunity. And really, they've all been supportive of what we're doing. This world is so small."

Hartman, among the nominees for the NCAA Woman of The Year (the winner will be announced in September), said she and her new teammates are trying to raise \$50,000 each to cover their skiing expenses for a year.

"We're trying to reach out to each of our homes, our communities," said Hartman, whose website - www.skihartman.com - is under construction. "I'm trying to reach out to the Buff Nation. Once a Buff, always a Buff. The support I've gotten at CU - all the support I got for five years - was just unbelievable."

Hartman said Andrews, the youngest member of the foursome, "is at the age of wanting to make a decision - go to school or pursue skiing. My goal is for her to be able to choose - and it's really not that easy."

That's because, according to Hartman, the U.S. Ski Team seems to be more prone to bringing in male than female skiers out of college. "That system needs to change and I want to be a leader with that . . . I want to reach out to anyone who recognizes that we're pushing boundaries," she said.

Hartman called her time at CU "an anchor more than a stepping stone" for her career and personal development and added that with the burgeoning international competition, some skiers now say it's more difficult to qualify for a Division-I grand slalom than it is to make an Olympic developmental squad.

Her point: For a junior skier with Olympic aspirations like Andrews, having to choose between attending college or trying to ascend the international ladder to make the Olympics amounts to a bad and unnecessary choice. "My goal is to compete to give women more of an opportunity in the sport . . . for them to go to school and still compete at the international level," Hartman said.

She's as passionate about this as she was about rehabbing the torn ACL in her left knee and resuming competition during an extra season last winter for the Buffs. And that worked out pretty well; last season she had 11 top 10 finishes in 13 of 15 races, with one win and a pair of podium appearances. She was an academic All-American (3.5 GPA), won the Pac-12 Conference Medal Award and was second-team All-American in the GS, missing a first-team berth in the slalom by one placement - and that was despite being so incapacitated by stomach flu symptoms that she was spending more time out of her skis than in them. (That's as much of a picture as needs to be painted.)

Before leaving for Oregon, Hartman had been working out and running with a brace on her left knee. When she recently skied Mt. Hood for the first time, the brace came off - and not much else recently has felt that good.

"Now, I can go out and not worry about that and know what I can do without it," she said. "Mentally and physically, it was amazing, just a big stepping stone for me. It was a huge accomplishment."

Her CU resume shows she can accomplish almost anything she attempts. You shouldn't be surprised at anything that happens for her and her new team - Independent Ski Racing - between now and the 2014 Winter Games.

Contact: BG.Brooks@Colorado.EDU

SHOW MENU



Irwin, 67, still has the desire to win

Wednesday, June 27, 2012

By Gerry Dulac, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



Matt Freed/Post-Gazette

Kirk Triplett signs autographs Tuesday at Fox Chapel Golf Club after his practice round for the Constellation Senior Players Championship.

The fire still burns inside Hale Irwin, even at age 67.

Oh, it's not the raging inferno it once was, not like when he won 20 times on the PGA Tour and became only the fifth player to win three U.S. Open titles.

Probably not even like it did when he dominated the Champions Tour from 1995-2007, a period in which he won a record 45 times and earned more than \$23 million.

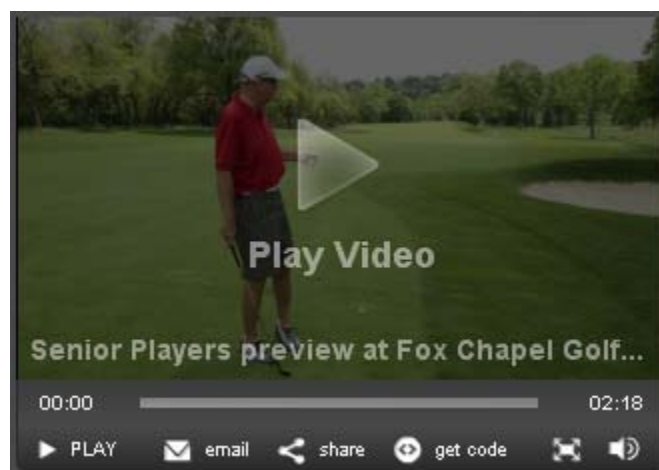
But he is at Fox Chapel Golf Club, preparing for the Constellation Senior Players Championship and getting his juices flowing for a run at an eighth major title on the Champions Tour, just like the old days.

"I still have the competitive fire burning," Irwin said. "It's not the

 PG VIDEO

raging Olympic flame it once was, but, at the same time, I still have the desire to compete, I still have the desire to excel as best as I can."

Irwin saw flashes of his old excellence a month ago when he shot 66 and bested his age in the second round of the Senior PGA Championship. He followed that with rounds of 69-68 and finished third behind winner Roger Chapman -- his best finish on the Champions Tour this season.



Irwin has not won a tour event since the 2007 MasterCard Championship, but he has not given up the belief he still can.

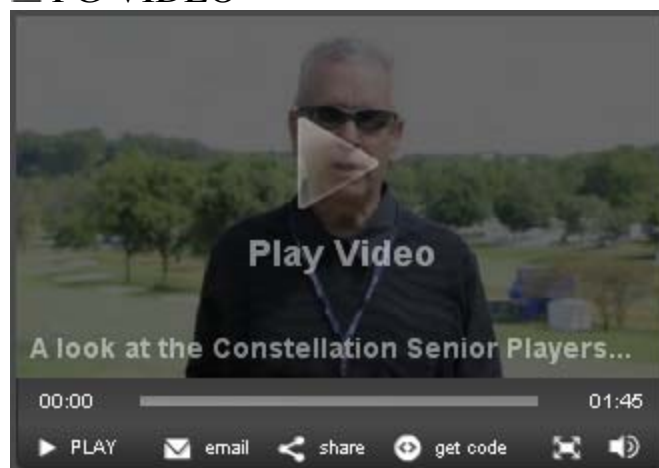
"It's been a little better," Irwin was saying Tuesday, standing outside the equipment van before deciding how many holes he wanted to play in a practice round. "I had a few good rounds, but I haven't put together that real consistent tournament, though I did at the Senior PGA. Over the last few tournaments, I'm not getting out of the round what I feel that I should.

"It's not necessarily bad breaks. I'm not creating opportunities to keep that momentum going forward. I'm not hitting the critical shot at the critical time to keep that critical momentum going."

Like many of the older players on the Champions Tour, Irwin is trying to pace his practice routine this week. He will play in the pro-am today (9 a.m. tee time on No. 10), but he didn't plan to do anything more than just play a couple of holes, or even just walk them, after reporting Tuesday.

Irwin limits the number of balls he likes to hit before the first round. And, with a 72-hole tournament, he doesn't want to overdo his preparation before the start of the event, especially a major.

PG VIDEO



"That's one of reasons I'm trying to take it easy in my preparation," Irwin said when asked if he still gets excited for major tournaments. "I just got to be careful how much golf I put in. My back doesn't want to swing the way it once did so I'm trying to keep the number of balls hit prior to Thursday to a minimum."

Irwin always was known as one of the best long-iron players in his days on the PGA Tour, but he also considered himself one of the best drivers on tour, as well.

That always has been his strength on the Champions Tour and it's one of the reasons he's concerned that the firm and fast conditions on a course that measures only 6,696 yards will take the driver out of the hands of a lot of the players at Fox Chapel.

"The players on the Champions Tour hit the ball so far now, if the course is short -- we saw that last week in Canada where there are a lot of hybrid and fairway metals off the tee and the driver was taken out of the player's hand," Irwin said. "With equipment now, players can still hit a hybrid 250 yards. It takes away a little bit of that driving skill, which I always think is a great measure of how well a player can play."

It doesn't seem like it has been 22 years since Irwin made a 45-foot birdie putt on the 72nd hole of the U.S. Open at Medinah to force an 18-hole playoff with Mike Donald -- a playoff Irwin won to become, at age 45, the oldest Open champion in history.

It was Irwin's third U.S. Open title, putting this former Colorado cornerback in select company. Only four players -- Jack Nicklaus, Ben Hogan, Bobby Jones and Willie Anderson -- have won four. Since then, Tiger Woods is the only other player to win three.

Don't be surprised if he puts on another surprise performance at Fox Chapel.

"My goals are not quite as lofty as they might have been 30 years ago, but they're still fairly lofty," Irwin said. "I'm of that mentality I don't accept something less than what I'm still capable of. And I hope that never ends frankly. That keeps me going, keeps me young, keeps me trying."

Gerry Dulac: gdulac@post-gazette.com; twitter: @gerrydulac.

First published on June 27, 2012 at 12:00 am